

VDP's ultimate goal is to establish educational outreach programs at other Navy research and development centers throughout the country. The initiative could eventually expand beyond the Navy and evolve into a national demonstration project encompassing all the Defense Department laboratories in a sustained effort to secure the long-term competitiveness of America's science and technology workforce by hooking more students on math and science at an earlier age.

"After approaching this problem from a practical aspect, our students have a clearer understanding of what public policy is and can see themselves in the future as citizens who have an active part to play in public policy," said H. H. Poole Middle School civics teacher Nancy Vitale.

For more information about the Virginia Demonstration Project, go to the N-STAR Web site at <http://www.nstarweb.com/>.

CHIPS

Calling All High School Students ... to a Science Fair

By Sharon Anderson

The Naval Science Awards Program is a U.S. Navy and Marine Corps program that encourages America's students to develop an interest in science and engineering. NSAP recognizes the accomplishments of eligible students at regional and state science and engineering fairs, and the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).

The Office of Naval Research sponsors NSAP for the Department of the Navy. The ONR executes and promotes science and technology programs of the naval services through universities, government laboratories and nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

The Navy and Marine Corps participate each year in more than 425 regional, district and state science and engineering fairs in which high school students exhibit their projects. Qualified experts drawn from local Navy and Marine Corps activities serve as judges, with subsequent presentation of prizes to successful competitors.

Each year the ONR participates in the ISEF, administered by Science Service. Nearly 1,200 high school students, in grades 9 through 12, representing over 500 science, math and engineering fairs affiliated with Science Service, display their research projects and vie for hundreds of special awards. At the ISEF, the ONR selects one winner in each of the 14 scientific disciplines, three students from any category who have projects deemed to have particular naval relevance, and one two-person team to receive an \$8,000 undergraduate scholarship, payable at \$2,000 per year.

Nineteen students were named "Naval Science Award Winners" at the 2006 ISEF in Indianapolis, Ind. The fair, held May 7-12 at the Indiana Convention Center, provided students with a diverse learning experience. Katherine Hesterman Newcomb, a Navy Reservist and microbiologist/medical educator who has been a Navy ISEF judge

since 1989, said she enjoys the students' enthusiasm and continues to be impressed by how hard they work on their projects.

"The projects become more sophisticated and specialized with each year. A greater percentage of students, have access to research laboratories in which to carry out their work and, overall, the mentoring seems to improve each year. This contributes to increased difficulty in judging, with the necessary time limitations. Although people often find this hard to believe but, if you ask any of the judges, you will hear that the complexity of a number of the projects is often at a master's or doctoral level," Newcomb said.

In addition to naval scientific areas, other project categories included the behavioral-social sciences, botany, environmental science, medicine and health, space science and zoology. The Navy hopes the fairs will excite the students' interest in science or engineering so they will pursue advanced degrees in these areas.

Midshipman 2nd Class Craig Wright, a three-time competitor in the science fairs and now a Navy ISEF judge, said participating in the fairs helps students decide on a career path.

"I can personally attest to the significance that the science fair played in my life. Researching and competing in the fair challenged my mind more than any other program I ever engaged in. Now a midshipman at the U. S. Naval Academy, I accredit a large amount of my success at the academy to what I learned through the science fairs," Wright said.

The fairs also give students a chance to talk with other students and discover new fields of study.

"Participating students realize it is an excellent venue to meet other students with similar interests, to meet mentors working in the field, to learn of opportunities for internships, and to learn of the variety of job opportunities involving science. Seeing other projects often sparks ideas for their own research. For their friends who have not participated, they can see the positive impact this experience has, and may pique their interest to also become involved," Newcomb said.

Wright agreed that participating in the fairs opens new horizons for students. "I was able to investigate a wide variety of scientific disciplines without the fear of committing to a single subject. Now in college, I have a good idea of my interests and am pursuing a degree in aerospace engineering."

Naval Science Awards are open to high school students in grades 9 through 12 who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States or its territories at the time of their selection.

According to Newcomb, just attending a science fair is a memorable experience. "I believe that anyone who attends the ISEF cannot help but be impressed at these young scientists' work and dedication. To use one of their expressions, 'It is awesome!'"

For more information contact the NSAP program manager at (703) 696-4111 or NSAP_help@onr.navy.mil.

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